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Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 08832 080109Z
71
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 PM-04 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03
AID-05 IGA-02 MC-02 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 H-01
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 /073 W
---------- 035509
O R 080014Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9451
INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
SECNAV WASHDC
CNO WASHDC
CINCPACFLT MAKALAPA HI

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CINCPACFLT PASS TO SECRETARY MIDDENDORF

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PARM, AS
SUBJ: GRUMMAN S2E AIRCRAFT

REF: A. USDAO CANBERRA 060303Z DEC 76
B. STATE 297471 (NOTAL)
C. DEFNAV CANBERRA 060415Z DEC 76 (NOTAL)

1. MONDAY MORNING I TELEPHONED DEFMIN KILLEN AND EXPRESSED REGRETS AT UNFORTUNATE FIRE SUNDAY WHICH DESTROYED OR SEVERELY DAMAGED 12 OF AUSTRALIA'S 13 GRUMMAN S2E AIRCRAFT. I SAID WE WANTED TO DO ANYTHING WE COULD TO HELP ALTHOUGH I DID NOT KNOW WHAT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE OR EVEN WHAT AUSTRALIA MIGHT WANT DONE. I ASKED DEFMIN TO LET US KNOW WHAT HELP THEY WANTED AND WE WOULD SEE WHAT WE COULD DO. NO PRICE WAS MENTIONED AT ALL.

2. IN QUESTION TIME IN PARLIAMENT LATER MONDAY MORNING FOLLOWING EXCHANE TOOK PLACE:

QUOTE. MR. E.G. WHITLAM -- I ASK THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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A QUESTION. WHAT IS THE BEST ESTIMATE HE CAN GIVE OF THE

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COST OF REPLENISHING THE FLEET AIR ARM WITH GRUMMAN TRACKER AIRCRAFT IN AS GOOD CONDITION AND WITH AS GOOD EQUIPMENT AS THOSE LOST IN THE FIRE AT NOWRA ON SATURDAY NIGHT?

QUOTE. MR. KILLEN -- THE HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN WILL BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE WHITE PAPER DISCLOSES THAT 6 TRACKER AIRCRAFT -- THAT IS 6 AIRCRAFT IN ADDITION TO THOSE WHICH WE HAD -- WERE TO BE DELIVERED IN JUNE OR JULY OF THIS YEAR. I AM UNDER HEAVY OBLIGATION TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR WHO RANG THIS MORNING TO SAY THAT THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION WOULD DO WHATEVER IT COULD WITH ALL POSSIBLE HASTE TO REPLACE THE AIRCRAFT. I OBSERVE IN PASSING THAT THE AIRCRAFT IS A TYPE OF AIRCRAFT WHICH IS NOW BEING PHASED OUT BY THE UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES. MY LAST INQUIRY INDICATES THAT SOMESEVENTY OR EIGHTY OF THOSE AIRCRAFT WERE AVAILABLE SOME TIME AGO. WHETHER THEY ARE AVAILABLE TO-DAY I JUST DO NOT KNOW. BUT --

QUOTE. MR. KEATING -- THE PRICE WILL BE HIGHER.
QUOTE. MR. KILLEN -- THE COST OF THE REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT WAS $73,000.
QUOTE. MR. E.G. WHITLAM -- THERE IS THE COST OF THE EQUIP-MENT, TOO.
QUOTE. MR. KILLEN -- I AM INFORMED THAT THE COST WAS $73,000 FOR THE AIRCRAFT. IT IS A SECOND HAND AIRCRAFT. THAT FIGURE INCLUDES ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT. NEVERTHELESS I WILL DOUBLE CHECK. I ASKED THE SIMPLE QUESTION AND I GOT THE SIMPLE REPLY, $73,000 FOR A SECOND HAND AIRCRAFT -- ONE THAT HAD BEEN USED. NEVERTHELESS, TO PUT MY HONOURABLE FRIEND'S MIND AT REST I WILL MAKE A FURTHER INQUIRY. I ACCEPTED THE INFORMATION ON THE BASIS ON WHICH IT WAS GIVEN TO ME. END QUOTE.

3. "INQUIRY" REFERRED TO IN PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE WAS NOT AN INQUIRY TO EMBASSY BUT APPARENTLY TO DEFMIN STAFF. PRE-SUME IT WAS DERIVED FROM PRICE OF 6 GRUMMAN S2E'S ORDERED FROM U.S. 14 JULY 1976 AT US$93,000 EACH PLUS 2 PERCENT ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGE. PRICE OF A$73,000 COULD NO LONGER HOLD SINCE DEVALUATION.

4. ALL NEWSPAPERS CARRIED STORY OF U.S. OFFER TO HELP, SOME
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ACCURATELY AND SOME INACCURATELY INDICATING U.S. HAD AGREED TO PROVIDE REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SO FAR AS IS KNOWN NONE INDICATED U.S. WILLINGNESS TO SELL AT $73,000 PRICE ALTHOUGH DEFMIN'S USE OF THAT ESTIMATE IN PARLIAMENT WAS CARRIED.

5. IN ADDITION TO REF C (BEING REPEATED TO SECSTATE) EMBASSY DAO TELEPHONED SECNAV AIDE AND ASKED THAT SECNAV BE

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BRIEFED ON FIRE, OUR OFFER TO HELP AND GOA CNS REQUEST TO CNO
IN HOPES SECNAV MIGHT BE ABLE TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE U.S.
HELP WITH GOA OFFICIALS ON HIS TRIP HERE THIS WEEK. SECNAV
HAD DATES TOMORROW WITH GOA DEFENSE OFFICIALS, DEFMIN AND
PRIMIN.

6. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT CNS REQUEST TO CNO (REFTEL C)
WAS FOR 18S2G AIRCRAFT RATHER THAN S2E AIRCRAFT.

7. SUGGEST YOU REQUEST COPY OF /CNO WASHINGTON DTG 071955Z
DEC 76 JUST RECEIVED.
HARGROVE

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